

Research Proposal

I propose to do research in a number of closely related areas which bear on the motives and strategies that drive and shape U.S. nuclear arms and arms control programs and war planning, from the perspective of high-level managers of national security. I will focus on the particular, little-recognized pattern of U.S. first use nuclear threats in U.S. interventions in the Third World, and the impact of such readiness to threaten or initiate tactical nuclear war on U.S. and Soviet weapons programs, international security, and the likelihood of limited or general nuclear war.

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The four areas of research to be considered have several properties in common. They are each highly important, in my judgment, to the questions above, yet they have been almost entirely ignored in most discussions of policy relating to international security. With respect to each of them I happen to have both personal, "inside" experience, by way of past official staffwork or research at a high level—which I propose to draw on as part of my data and use to illuminate other parts—and I have pursued long-term research. Additionally, in each case critically relevant new data have fairly recently become available which yet remain significantly neglected in most analyses.

These related areas of research are:

The nuclear dimension of U.S. intervention policy outside Europe, and the likelihood of U.S. first use of nuclear weapons in the Third World.

The implications of U.S. intervention and first use policy for strategic arms programs and arms control.

The emergence of strategic instability: its causes, its risks, and its potential cure.

The moral and psychological universe of high-level national security managers, as this bears on the risks of nuclear war.

(as: situation right of 1st Aug-)

A starting point for my current research in each of these areas will be a body of data that was virtually unknown until my own investigation began a dozen years ago. The data concerns recurrent instances of threats or preparations for first use of nuclear weapons at the Presidential level during international crises.

In 1981 I presented for the first time in print the evidence then available for the following proposition: that every President from Truman to Reagan, with the possible exception of Ford, had felt compelled to consider and prepare, or threaten, imminent U.S. initiation of tactical or strategic nuclear warfare, in the context of an ongoing non-nuclear conflict or crisis.

My article, a preliminary survey and comparative analysis of these cases, and an early statement of my hypotheses on their implications, began:

"The notion common to nearly all Americans that 'no nuclear weapons have been used since Nagasaki' is mistaken. It is not the case that U.S. nuclear weapons have simply piled up over the years...unused and unusable, save for the single function of deterring their use against us by the Soviets. Again and again, generally in secret from the American public, U.S. nuclear weapons have been used, for quite different purposes: in the precise way that a gun is used when you point it at someone's head in a direct confrontation, whether or not the trigger is pulled."

In the last few years other investigations, some stimulated by this article, have uncovered more instances and considerably more evidence for my generalization, based on newly declassified documents and on interviews of decision-makers. Nevertheless, both the individual cases and the existence of the pattern remain so unfamiliar, even to many highly informed researchers and former officials, and they are so important to the research I propose, that I present my 1981 list here, expanded to include recently reported instances (in brackets):

-Truman's deployment of B-29's, officially described as "atomic-capable", to bases in Britain and Germany at the outset of the Berlin Blockade, June 1948.

-Truman's press conference warning that nuclear weapons were under consideration, the day after marines were surrounded by Chinese Communist troops at the Chosin Reservoir, Korea, November 30, 1950.

-Eisenhower's secret nuclear threats against China, to force and maintain a settlement in Korea, 1953.

-Secretary of State Dulles's secret offer to Prime Minister Bidault of three tactical nuclear weapons in 1954 to relieve the French troops besieged by the Indochinese at Dienbienphu.

-["Diplomatic use of the Bomb" (Nixon's description) to deter Soviet unilateral action against the British and French in the Suez crisis.]

-Eisenhower's secret directive to the Joint Chiefs during the "Lebanon Crisis" in 1958 to prepare to use nuclear weapons, if necessary, to prevent an Iraqi move into the oilfields of Kuwait.

-Eisenhower's secret directive to the Joint Chiefs in 1958 to plan to use nuclear weapons, imminently, against China if the Chinese Communists should attempt to invade the island of Quemoy, occupied by Chiang's troops, a few miles offshore mainland China.

-[Comparable threats made during the 1954 Quemoy crisis.]

-[1959 Berlin Crisis (Nixon)]

-The Berlin Crisis, 1961.

-The Cuban Missile Crisis, 1962.

-Numerous "shows of nuclear force" involving demonstrative deployments or alerts—deliberately visible to adversaries and intended as a "nuclear signal"—of forces with a designated role in U.S. plans for strategic nuclear war.,

-Much public discussion in newspapers and in the Senate, of (true) reports that the White House had been advised of the possible necessity of nuclear weapons to defend marines surrounded at Khe Sanh, Vietnam, 1968.

-Nixon's secret threats of massive escalation, including possible use of nuclear weapons, conveyed to the North Vietnamese by Henry Kissinger, 1969-1972.

-[Threats to deter Soviet attack on Chinese nuclear capability, 1969-1970. (Nixon)]

-[Threats and naval deployment to deter Soviet response to possible Chinese intervention against India in the Indo-Pakistani war, 1971 (Nixon)]

-[Nixon puts SAC on high alert in October 1973 to deter the Soviets from intervening with ground forces to separate the combatants in the Arab-Israeli war, by underscoring U.S. threats to oppose them by force and expressing U.S. willingness to risk escalation to all-out nuclear war. Nixon)]

-The Carter Doctrine on the Middle East (January 1980) as explained by Defense Secretary Harold Brown, Assistant Secretary of State William Dyess, and other spokesmen, reaffirmed, in essence, by President Reagan in 1981.

-[Serious White House and JCS consideration of possible imminent use of tactical nuclear weapons if a secret Soviet buildup on the Iranian border led to a Soviet invasion of Iran, followed by expression of warnings to the Soviet Union.] 1

The implications of these cases and the overall pattern, along with other data and

considerations, will be explored in relation to the four general areas mentioned above. I now turn to these, listing some representative questions, hypotheses, and evidence that will be addressed in each.

I. The nuclear dimension of U.S. intervention policy outside Europe, and the likelihood of U.S. first use of nuclear weapons in the Third World.

—How many other "secret nuclear crises" remain to be discovered?

The latest instance, relating to possible use of U.S. nuclear weapons in August 1980, emerged from secrecy just this month in an article in the New York Times which may be the first in that publication ever to mention a pattern of past Presidential threats. As in most past cases, including Nixon's revelations last year, the nuclear dimension of this decision making, confirmed by White House participants, was not mentioned by the President in his memoirs.

—What further evidence can be found on the details of these incidents as a basis for a comparative analysis?

1 See "A Call to Mutiny," *Protest and Survive*, 1981,; references are given in each case to the open literature, along with extensive quotations. The cases in brackets are cited by Richard Nixon in "A Nation Coming Into Its Own," *Time*, July 29, 1985. An important case study of the 1973 Middle East alert is presented by Barry Blechman and Douglas Hart in "The Political Utility of Nuclear Weapons: The 1973 Middle East Crisis," *International Security*, Summer 1982, Vol. 7, No. 1. The August 1980 White House discussion is reported by Richard Halloran in the New York Times, September 2, 1986, based on interviews and an account of the Secretary of Defense and JCS involvement by Benjamin F. Schemmer: "Was the U.S. Ready to Resort to Nuclear Weapons for the Persian Gulf in 1980?", *Armed Forces Journal International*, September 1986.

—What are the various functions of the extreme secrecy surrounding these episodes? What are its various consequences for the bureaucratic process of decision making? [This was a specific aspect of my official study of decision making in nuclear crises in 1964, on which I will draw.] What does it reveal about White House perceptions of public attitudes on risk-taking and moral constraints relating to nuclear weapons? What are its implications for the democratic control of foreign and military policy?

—How close has the United States come to executing first use threats in past crises? What is the meaning of "close": how is it usefully measured? How are the intentions of the various Presidents to be understood in these instances? To what extent were any of the preparations or threats "bluffs"? What is the meaning of "bluff"? What risks are associated with such bluffs?

—What does this history reveal about the actions that may be taken to enhance the credibility and effectiveness of threats? What has been the apparent effect of these actions on the expectations and responses of adversaries and of allies? How reliable are "crisis communications" by means of military deployments and alerts, and what effect do they have on U.S.

commitment and loss of control?

–What are the interests in the Third World that have appeared so vital to American Presidents and high-level decision makers that they have considered launching nuclear weapons to protect these interests? ✓

–What factors in international security condition the likelihood of conflicts in which such threats might arise in the future? Are such threats getting more or less likely? What policies would make them less likely? What factors condition the likelihood that such a threat might be carried out in the future?

–What factors bear on the likelihood that the Soviets might reply to such a first use?

–Has the perceived credibility of U.S. first use threats at various times been a factor in judging the feasibility of U.S. interventions? Has it thereby determined the dimensions of the U.S. sphere of influence, or determined what interests can prudently be perceived as vital? ✓

The implications of U.S. intervention and first use policy for strategic arms programs and arms control. And

III. The emergence of strategic instability: its causes, its risks, and its potential cure.

[Since US adversaries in the Third World have so far all been non-nuclear, consideration of US nuclear first use against them has offered the prospect that it might remain unilateral, and limited to their territory, "safely for the US," in a way that would hardly be imaginable if nuclear weapons were used against Soviet troops, especially in the Soviet Union or Europe, East or West. ✓

But that "safety" remains provisional, because all of these non-nuclear adversaries have also been allies or clients of the Soviet Union, which has had at least the physical capability to provide them with a "nuclear umbrella"—the promise of nuclear retaliation to a nuclear attack against them—since the early Fifties. Consideration of US first use against a Third World adversary has always had to deal with the implicit possibility of a Soviet or Chinese Communist response, either nuclear or a non-nuclear response that would require still further escalation.] ✓

The central hypothesis to be explored is that US policies on nuclear arms and arms control are designed, in part, to support the credibility of threats that the US will, if necessary, initiate nuclear war, essentially to protect US non-nuclear interventionary forces from non-nuclear challenges to their operations in support of US interests overseas. ✓

Theater and strategic nuclear forces, according to this hypothesis, are designed to do this by enhancing the credibility of US threats to escalate nuclear war—possibly to the level of a strategic preemptive US first strike—if US first-use of nuclear weapons should lead to Soviet retaliation in kind or Soviet escalation. ✓

In an era of relative parity, it is further presumed, adequate credibility that a non-mad leader might carry out threats to escalate to a large-scale strategic attack depends on the plausibility of an incentive to preempt: which depends on a considerable mutual vulnerability to disarming attack and thus a mutual basis for fear that the other may preempt. Thus—in the absence of alternative bases for adequate credibility of threats to escalate to a first strike—a reliance on first use threats to protect US vital interests abroad generates a willingness to tolerate, and even to construct, conditions of increased "instability."

This relatively unfamiliar interpretation can "predict" and explain—demonstrably better, I believe, than any competing hypotheses, a number of which will be also considered—both past and current development and deployment programs in considerable detail, in terms of numbers and qualitative technological characteristics of weapons and basing, and the general nature of US arms control policy, both in terms of proposals offered and accepted, and, perhaps more important, proposals rejected or never advanced by the US Government.

In particular, it can account for an otherwise paradoxical pattern: that programs on both sides appear flagrantly to flaunt the prescriptions for strategic "stability" that were first elaborated in the late '50's and have been regarded as desiderata by consensus among analysts and officials ever since.

—What do U.S. planners see as requirements for deterring the Soviet Union from retaliating to U.S. first use of nuclear weapons? Elements include: characteristics of weapons systems and deployment; announced strategies of escalation; alerts; weapons movements; command and control capabilities; defensive systems; and arms control policies.

—How do these presumed requirements compare to past and current strategic weapons programs? Is there evidence that the requirement of deterring or responding to Soviet retaliation to U.S. first use has been a conscious consideration in programming U.S. strategic forces and the selection and rejection of official U.S. arms control proposals? Is this inferred requirement a good predictor of such policies?

—Is U.S. "strategic superiority" a requirement for the credibility of U.S. first use threats? Or can strategic instability substitute to some degree for an unobtainable "superiority" as a basis for credibility of U.S. first use threats? (That is, as a deterrent to Soviet nuclear retaliation to U.S. nuclear first use.)

—What characteristics of strategic posture on both sides would incline either the U.S. or the Soviet Union to move to an automated launch-on-warning system? Likewise, what conditions would lead to decentralized delegation of authority to use nuclear weapons in crises? [D.E. background comment]

—What characteristics of weapons systems would increase the likelihood of deliberate preemption by either side in a nuclear crisis?

- ┌ -How is the direction of current weapons programs influenced by these considerations?
- How would the explosion of tactical nuclear weapons (where and how many) bear on the likelihood of preemption?
- What role do decapitation strategies play in U.S. or Soviet preemption planning?
- What arms control proposals would forestall developments that increase the likelihood of launch-on-warning, delegation, or preemption? Are any of them included among current U.S. arms control proposals?

IV. The moral and psychological universe of high-level national security managers, as this bears on the risks of nuclear war.

-In view of the Just War doctrine, in law and Christian ethics, how likely is a President to risk the massacre of non-combatants by first use of nuclear weapons? ✓

-Could a President get such orders carried out? Could he get these planned and prepared? ✓
If so: how is this to be explained? What is the practical moral universe of the managers of the U.S. security apparatus, and does it differ coherently from Just War principles? [See evolution of strategic bombing practice in WWII.]

-What is the role of an ethic of obedience and group loyalty? [See the work of Milgram and Kelman.] ✓

-What is the role of a psychology of compliance among the decision-makers and their staffs? ✓

-Under what circumstances might "normal", conscientious national leaders deliberately undertake actions predicted to have a high risk of social and moral catastrophe? [See work of Kahneman and Tversky, and Berman on Lyndon Johnson's escalation in 1965.] ✓

How might these considerations bear on a Presidential decision to undertake first use of nuclear weapons, or to escalate a nuclear conflict?

The method for the further research I propose is primarily reflection and writing. Daily writing, for a prolonged period. There must be reading, and consultation, but reading primarily of the volumes, boxes and drawers of notes and outlines I have already generated. Tapes exist of a great many lectures and interviews on the subjects of this research, and transcriptions of many of them would be a worthwhile expense, as aids to new drafting.

But much more is called for than a simple transcription and editing process. The earlier

lectures represent highly useful pilot work, as do my notes. In order to develop and relate the hypotheses I have presented above, a great deal of reworking and thinking lies ahead.

I look forward now to the most creative and productive part of the research process. However persuasive my concepts and conclusions seem to me at this moment, I know from experience that more than half of what seems valuable in the product of the typing month by month will represent new conceptions, new formulations, connections and inferences that have emerged in the process of writing.

In emphasizing throughout my discussion above the potential explanatory contribution of the essentially new considerations and data concerning threats, I have perhaps not made it clear enough that I neither seek or propose a single-factor explanation in any of these areas. I am, in fact, well aware of the existence of not just one but several alternative hypotheses on most of the questions considered, each one of which may fit the available facts for that particular phenomenon quite as well as the one on which I have focused.

In explaining strategic programs, for example, well-explored hypotheses range from the pursuit of technological opportunities by the weapons labs to the strategic pursuit of "second-strike damage-limiting insurance," from pressures of Service rivalries and ambitions to bureaucratic inertia, imitation of Soviet initiatives, pursuit of a capability for victory in general war, pursuit of "superiority," or various theories of the requirements of deterring Soviet preemptive attack.

These alternatives are familiar to me from long experience using them heuristically, and none will be ignored in this analysis. Almost surely a number of them are valid simultaneously, in given contexts and at different times, and many phenomena are over-determined. The point of this project is to arrive at the best understanding possible, and to discover and illustrate the merits of adding certain hypotheses to the set to be considered.

In order to understand when and why "immoral" or reckless threats get made and whether they might be carried out, I will explore the intellectual, moral and psychological framework of war planning and crisis decision-making, drawing on my own experience as an insider in these situations, and as an official researcher into crises. I will draw as well on my earlier experience as an analyst of decision-making under uncertainty and of threat-behavior, along with recent data by social psychologists and psychologists (in particular, Milgram, Kelman, Kahneman and Tversky, Slovic and Lichtenstein), applying these to newly-available data on of two crises involving decisions about escalation, in both of which I was a direct participant: LBJ's decision to escalate in Vietnam, 1965, and JFK's crisis decisions in Cuba.

With respect to the impact of first use threats on the arms race and stability, I will draw mainly on my own experience in evaluating weapons and plans in the light of various criteria, and, of course, on all available public sources on the nature of the current programs and planning concepts.

The very possibility of a relation between the design and deployment of nuclear weapons systems to be operated by SAC, policy toward underdeveloped countries in Asia or the Middle

East has been almost totally ignored or deprecated by most observers, supporters or critics of US foreign and military policy, with the notable exception of some who are now Reagan Administration officials and consultants. The views of the latter, as well as their influence, will get more serious attention from me in this project than they are accustomed to enjoying from their critics.

Some of these, like Paul Nitze and Eugene Rostow, have asserted and analyzed such a relation for a very long period, influencing and—in the light of this hypothesis—illuminating government policy under both Democratic and Republican Presidents. I will analyze Nitze's contributions, in particular, both as a source of hypotheses and insights and as data on the considerations influencing the arms race and war planning (My own work on the war plans in 1961 was formally done under Nitze, to whom I was a consultant).

Jerry Sanders, whose UC thesis, *Peddlers of Crisis*, on the Committee for Present Danger (CPD) founded by Nitze and Rostow is an important source in this connection, is a colleague whose insights into current Administration thinking based partly on recent interviews, are also helpful.

On the current programs and pronouncements of Reagan officials, and their implications for this hypothesis, I have relied heavily in recent years on the work of Christopher Paine and Desmond Ball, along with Charles Schwartz, Michael Klare, John Pike and Howard Morland, both in their writings and in consultation, and I expect to continue.

Paine and Randall Forsberg independently pioneered in addressing the hypothesis I am examining—the only other researchers I know to do so, outside of Reagan circles—and the others mentioned have done important work in applying it to current programs, as have Frank von Hippel and Harold Feiveson. I would look forward to consulting with all of these researchers as closely as possible in this project. Likewise, I have had very useful interaction with Herbert York and Richard Garwin on this approach and would hope to discuss further work with them.

On aspects of command and control and its relation to the risk of uncontrolled escalation, along with the role of preparations for decapitation in first-strike planning, I will continue to consult with Desmond Ball and John Pike, and I hope as well to have discussions with Bruce Blair and Daniel Ford. Although I have cancelled all plans for lecturing in the coming months in order to free time for sustained writing I have accepted several invitations to address professional seminars and meetings, which should offer extremely fruitful input on certain specific aspects of this project. These include an address to the Western division of the American Philosophical Association on the subject of "Just War, Just Threats, and 'Just Terrorism'" and a seminar to the Stanford Decision Theory Seminar, sponsored by Amos Tversky and Kenneth Arrow. I have been consulting with Gregory Kavka on issues of ethical philosophy related to deterrence. Finally, one of the most exciting intellectual prospects ahead for me is the opportunity to work closely with Tversky and Kahneman (who has just moved to Berkeley) in developing their empirical work on decision making under uncertainty, and applying it to political phenomena.

A Note on Significance

The first import of this project, its very starting point, is to focus attention upon a generally-unimagined danger in the nuclear era: the real possibility that nuclear weapons will explode upon humans in a Third World country because an American President has deliberately chosen, in what he perceives as a desperate situation, to initiate tactical nuclear war. Whatever anyone might think about the fitness of that decision or the policy that led up to it, one can only receive the news of that prospect as a frightening addition to the risks of our time.

There are experts today who believe that analyses of stability are outmoded in their ominous inferences, because with the current level of nuclear warheads on both sides, they cannot imagine circumstances under which a sane leader would pursue the hypothetical advantages that his strategic "damaging-limiting" forces have supposedly bought for him. But these systems have not been tested in the crucible of a limited nuclear war. And these experts, I have found in discussion, have not considered the likelihood—in the light of the hidden history of nuclear crises—that such a war might actually occur by decision of an American President.

Contemplation of these possibilities, I judge from my own experience, leads to a very increased sense of urgency about stopping, either by unilateral initiative or bilateral negotiation, the new destabilizing weapons developments. For arms control, an entirely new framework for negotiations is implied, focusing on the characteristics of weapons, including accuracy and deployment, rather than on numbers. The short-run criterion of stability would put great premium on totally averting the testing or deployment of whole new types of weapons systems that encourage preemption, delegation, or launch on warning approaches.

[To reduce the risk of nuclear war, either limited or all-out, it is more important than most have realized to reexamine, reevaluate, and modify—perhaps first bringing under more democratic control—US interrelationships and mutual dependence with regimes, resources and people in the Third World; US foreign and interventionary policies; US first-use policy in the Third World as well as Europe; and the linkages between all of these and US strategic nuclear forces: threats of escalation and weapons programs.

[Material in brackets above and on page 10 was added after submission of the proposal on September 30.]

[EXTRA FOOTNOTE TEXT -delete later]:

*****"Call to Mutiny," Protest and Survive, New York, 1981: references in each case to the open literature are given, along with extensive quotations. The cases in brackets are cited by Richard Nixon in "A Nation Coming Into Its Own," Time, July 29, 1985. An important case study of the 1973 Middle East alert is presented by Barry Blechman and Douglas Hart in "The Political Utility of Nuclear Weapons: The 1973 Middle East Crisis," International Security, Summer 1982, Vol. 7, No. 1. The August 1980 White House discussion is reported by Richard Halloran in the New York Times, September 2, 1986, based on interviews and an account of the Secretary of Defense and JCS involvement by Benjamin F. Schemmer, "Was the U.S. Ready to Resort to Nuclear Weapons for the Persian Gulf in 1980?", Armed Forces Journal International, September 1986.

As I said in 1972 about the war: "Efforts at better understanding cannot be put off till the triumph of resistance, the end of the war (any more than continued resistance can await a perfect understanding)."

Of course, we have never yet achieved a perfect understanding of the war.

But it is well to remember that the war did end.

[August 18, 2007: What I wrote—quoted above—in the seventh year of a stalemated war in Asia is uncannily applicable today at the end of a fourth year of a stalemated war in the Middle East. It was painful to read it in 1986, knowing as I did then that the earlier war had three more years to go, and that as I had written those words it was on the verge of a major escalation in violence, the spring offensive of 1972. Almost certainly this war has many years to go, I believe many more than the ten that it took to extricate the U.S. from Vietnam. And it may well be on the verge of expanding, to Iran, even this month or next, or (less likely, I believe, though others think more likely) six months from now.

And I think I understand better than I did in 1972 why it was so hard to end the Vietnam War, and why it will be even harder to end the U.S. role in this one. In both cases, as Luke Mitchell has said to me recently, there is fear in politicians of being charged with losing a war, of being weak, unmanly, weak on something: Communism then, "terrorism" now. (Actually, politicians who are choosing this means, war in Iraq, of demonstrating that they are strong not weak, on terrorism, are greatly *strengthening* terrorism now, in a way that our anti-Communism did not strengthen Communism then, or create dangers of retaliation in our homeland.) But as I hinted then, in questions I raised in a footnote on p. 11 of *Papers on the War*, that fear is built into our system, I now believe, to serve interests beyond politicians' interests in reelection. Rather, the latter are *harnessed* to serve powerful domestic (or multinational) economic/corporate interests in maintaining an imperial role for the U.S. and its profitable and powerful support structure, the military-industrial (financial, energy) complex.

As I put it in 1972: "I am increasingly convinced of the direct influence on officials' behavior of fears of a McCarthyite 'right-wing backlash' if they should be associated with 'losing Indochina.' But how realistic have those fears been over the last decade? Why do those officials act on them still without testing their reality? And why do they so often act, in addressing the public, to give them greater reality? Whose interests, finally, are served by a policy adapted to those fears and a society organized around them? My recent research has made these further questions seem highly cogent."

What made those questions—which I was not yet ready to answer, even tentatively, then—so cogent was that by 1968-69, let alone 1972, it was very hard to believe that Democratic politicians' fears of right-wing punishment at the polls for leaving Vietnam could be realistic: yet they were still unwilling to take responsibility for ending the war by cutting off funds.

(They didn't do that till *Nixon* withdrew all the troops in early 1973: though to be sure, he did that

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only because he foresaw that Congress would cut off all funds, including funds for airpower, in January 1973 if he didn't, especially because of horror at the Christmas bombing. (Whether they really would have done that if Nixon had followed the desires of Haig and others to continue the bombing into January is not clear; but it was a reasonable fear. The antiwar movement *can* be credited with making that a likely congressional move, I think. (The Pentagon Papers? Only as one, not major, element by that time; this was a year and half after they had come out. They *may* have contributed to a public mood that led Nixon and Kissinger sometime in 1971 to be willing to contemplate removing all the troops after the election. But the mood in Congress during the recess bombing, after "peace is at hand," made it immediately imperative to do so. (Haig's belief that more bombing would have led to success—removal of the NVA from South Vietnam—before Congress had cut off funds, seems puerile. Anyway, Nixon wasn't willing to gamble on it.)

In fact, Humphrey was surely right that LBJ could afford to cut losses immediately after the Goldwater debacle in 1964; indeed, that he would be *better* off politically if he did that, perhaps doomed in 1968 if he didn't! So my own emphasis on domestic politics (in my Quagmire Myth paper, written in 1970) looked questionable, or at least, raised new questions, by 1968. It may still have been true that politicians *consciously*, perhaps by inertia, *consciously feared* domestic political risks of losing a war. But why did they, when the grassroots, by a large majority, wanted out?

Well, for one thing, they feared that a right-wing minority could use the media to charge them with weakness after the event, even if the public had been happy to see them end the war. But why would the media do that? Who would fund the campaign? (Democrats' ending the war was almost surely not going to make Republicans popular, by itself. It could have hastened the shift of the Wallace voters to the Republicans. Indeed, at least one factor in Nixon's mind, 1969-72, was concern that if he ended the troop involvement—and perhaps thus led, despite his use of airpower, to the NVA victory he was committed to preventing—that the Wallace voters would not all come to his camp in November, 1972, cutting down or eliminating his landslide even if he still won.) But why this major concern with weakness, fed by the media?

Two hypotheses, now:

- 1) Imperial policy, in general, is served by maintaining an imperial, militaristic, macho culture, in which patriotism is measured by celebration of our military prowess, superiority, and record of winning. Even if imperialist interests demand cutting losses in a particular conflict, because it hurts those interests worldwide more than it helps, it is important not to endorse the idea of being ever, a "good loser," or to reward the politicians who realistically—"cravenly," as the culture will say—do the cutting ("and running"). Let them give way to others, "winners," "not quitters," tough guys (like Hillary), who will write off this loss to incompetence or failure of nerve (even if the rulers know that there was no way to win). Don't replace the policy, replace the managers. (See the almost consensual story line, among both Democrats and Republicans, that "the problem" in Iraq, the reason that there is "now" "no good outcome possible," is earlier incompetence, and refusal of adequate resources. (See, I expect, the movie we are about to see, "No End in Sight.") That is the line to be expected from the Democrats in 2008. *yes*

- 2) (new this afternoon): The military-industrial complex is at worst ambivalent about a stalemated or losing war: because there are lots of profits to be made even in that, and the longer it goes on, the more! In other words, even when global strategic interests are damaged by continuation (as is certainly true in Iraq, and was true at least in terms of missed opportunities in Vietnam). Thus, fundamental "credibility" in terms of authority, an image of rationality and realism, may be hurting from continuation, despite an initial concern about losing credibility (of violence) if we backed off. Yet, there is this ambivalence: because various corporations are making a lot of money out of the war, however badly it's going. Put it another way: If there were profits to be made in withdrawing comparable to those made in continuing, we would cut losses in a bad situation a lot quicker.
3. Of course, in Iraq, there are not only vast, almost unimaginable (except to oil companies) profits to be made in the long run by controlling Middle East and specifically Iraqi oil, but our imperial stature and influence and security would, apparently, really be set back greatly by (a) leaving the field, withdrawing, (an ominous sign of vulnerability, etc.), and (b) leaving that oil to be controlled by someone else, a situation that might be much worse (analyse) than if we had never gone in and Saddam still controlled the oil.

✓ All these interests are served by building up the fear of a popular backlash among politicians; and by acting to make that fear realistic as much as possible, suppressing any discussion or awareness of alternative, non-imperial policies and their possible benefits, or the costs and dangers of the imperial policies, and by inculcating a culture of militarism in every sphere, education, child upbringing, media, recreation (for children), movies and TV, churches, as Mike Klare put it a lifetime ago, "the cultural hegemony of militarism." (Not, openly, "imperialism": especially after Iraq. But, "security of terrorism through militarism and surveillance," despite the reality that the militarism makes us increasingly vulnerable to terrorism and precludes reducing it).

But one other factor: Our population is, to say the least, quite vulnerable to manipulation in the direction of militarism. Are we really more vulnerable than others? (other Great Powers, not yet humbled by total defeat in war or loss of our overseas assets)? Or are we just, human? Certainly there is a human tendency in this direction, going back before the "dawn" (sic) of "civilization."

✓ I increasingly do feel that the public (i.e. the majority) is part of the problem: just as I had to conclude earlier about the Executive branch/the President, and then, Congress. And the media. (Increasingly, people say: but I'm not sure that's true, compared to any time earlier). (The 1971-1977 period may have been a temporary aberration. When Hedrick Smith says, to Ehrlich-Goldsmith, that the Pentagon Papers gave the press their manhood, established them as independent of the government, and that this was soon reinforced by Watergate, he is clearly distinguishing that stance from what came later. And, obviously, from what we've had, since at least 1991!

In my Introduction in 1972, I acknowledged that the release of the Pentagon Papers nearly a year earlier had had no dramatic (in fact, perceptible) effect on actual policy, nor did there seem to be a new mobilization of public resistance to the ongoing war (which was just about to get much larger and could have gotten much larger still. To be fair, the PP and the latent movement as a whole,

contained as it was after May 8 mining, might have kept a lid on, say, nuclear weapons; but probably more importantly, they didn't seem to be necessary.)

I asked (p. 40): "Will the Pentagon Papers in the hands of the public eventually do more? Or is it possible that the American people, too, are part of the problem; that our passivity, fears, obedience weld us, unresisting, into the stalemate machine: that we are the problem for much of the rest of the world?"

It is too soon to conclude that. There is too much information to be absorbed from the Pentagon Papers and the disclosures and analyses that are beginning to follow [this proved to be too optimistic; there never were any hearings on the Papers—the Democrats had no desire to expose further the lies and crimes of their own administrations—nor, to my surprise, any magazine articles that went beyond the initial, fast summary observations of the newspapers; no analytical pieces of the sort Neil Sheehan and Hedrick Smith initially wanted, comparing the revelations of the Papers with the actual newspaper accounts and public statements and backgrounders at the time (the newspapers had no more desire to "learn lessons" in public, or private, from their own errors, biases and manipulability, than the Democrats in Congress did; and it took years for major new revelations, especially from the White House, to emerge from FOIA and memoirs; the Papers themselves weren't widely read, by the public or by students]; "too many myths and lies to be unlearned; [there was some of this, but they were forgotten within a few years]; habits too strong to be changed so quickly in a public that has let its sovereignty in foreign affairs atrophy for thirty years.

"Still, one cannot be sure. ... Have I, then, simply moved my own pressures from one side to the other of an immovable, inevitable stalemate? [That was too pessimistic. Vietnam did end; especially with the help of Nixon's actions against me and the path to his resignation. But the next question is still hanging:] Have I, recently, only imagined an American that 'could'—short of radical change in its own society and politics [of which there is no sign at present, in majority culture]—change itself to *abandon counterinsurgency* in Vietnam and elsewhere, as once I imagined American and Saigon governments that could master it? [There is no evidence, as of August, 2007, for a reassuring answer to that. Chalmers Johnson, in *Nemesis*, gives a definite answer: There is no sign or likelihood of such a popular movement, and without it, no chance of a change in our imperial stance.]

"That is one position on the Left. It could be correct; yet it is a counsel of despair—which I am not ready to accept—with respect to the fate of the people of Indochina... [It was possible, short of radical change in our society and culture, to "help Americans free themselves and other victims from our longest war." But there was no oil in Vietnam. Johnson's case is much stronger, that it not possible to do that before the destruction of Iraq and probably other target-states such as Iran. It would be a radical change in our culture to cease being and acting like an empire. As EP Thompson said over twenty-five years ago, we (and then, the Soviets) don't have a military-industrial complex. We are a military-industrial complex. That is Chalmers Johnson's message in 2007; and he foresees no change. (There was, of course, truly radical change in the Soviet Union, non-violently and for most, unforeseeably. And it remains hard to predict, especially the future, as Yogi Berra is supposed to have said. On that uncertainty—and on our continued unwillingness to

accept the present reality—our hopes for the future, perhaps any future for humanity, must rest.

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\c2\ (This is being used as a "dump" or storage file for sections discarded from earlier versions: as of June 27-July 6...)

For over a quarter of a century I have been haunted by the thought: I am living in a society that is preparing an ultimate catastrophe.

To the contrary:

Although large-scale thermonuclear war is acknowledged by all to be "unthinkable," it has not been made impossible.

Nor would its occurrence come in the way of other environmental catastrophes like global warming or ozone depletion, by the uncoordinated, unplanned, essentially unthinking activities of myriads of independent institutions and individuals. A thermonuclear war extinguishing urban life in the Northern Hemisphere, or possibly most life on earth, would be the enactment of the most elaborate plans, the greatest application of advanced science, the most hierarchically organized and heavily invested preparations in the history of human projects.

Yet it is undoubtedly true that no one at all--none of the leaders who have directed these preparations or any of their agents--have ever desired such a culmination. What they do desire is to threaten to carry out nuclear warfare; the preparations are to make the threats credible, despite the apparent immorality, irrationality, and probably suicidal consequences of carrying them out. Many believe that the single reason for posing such threats is to prevent nuclear war--to reduce the probability of its occurrence to the maximum extent feasible--by threatening retaliation.

But that belief is false. Both sides are prepared to initiate nuclear attacks preemptively, if they believe their forces are about to be attacked with nuclear weapons; and the US in particular has planned and prepared to initiate nuclear war if necessary to avert a defeat in a non-nuclear war, not only in Europe but elsewhere.

My concern reflects direct high-level participation in the inner processes of preparations for large-scale thermonuclear war. As a RAND Corporation analyst and consultant to the Commander in Chief, Pacific (CINCPAC), the Office of Secretary of Defense and the White House, I studied the procedures and systems for directing the execution of US general nuclear war plans, and in particular the possibilities that these plans might be implemented on the basis of false alarms, or Presidential delegation of authority to lower-level commanders, or unauthorized actions by such commanders.

At the same time I was studying the nature of the nuclear war plans themselves; at the end of the Eisenhower era I had probably come to know more about each of these highly-secret subjects than

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other civilian. What I had learned alarmed me. It informed my efforts radically to reshape the plans and the control process when I was given the job, in 1961, of drafting the secret Kennedy Administration guidelines for the operational plans for general nuclear war.

At this time I shared the view of most of my colleagues that the primary danger of nuclear war--the risk we were mainly working to reduce--was posed by the possibility of a Soviet surprise attack on US retaliatory forces. Secondarily, the risk of war arising from a deliberate Soviet decision to blockade Berlin, as Khrushchev seemed to be threatening in the summer of '61, or, less likely, to invade Western Europe.

Then in the fall of 1961 I learned that the risk that had preoccupied my RAND colleagues and I for three years, the prospect of Soviet surprise attack, was wholly illusory. The Soviets had not even begun to acquire an ICBM force capable of a disarming first strike; Air Force intelligence estimates and Khrushchev's boasts--both taken seriously by RAND analysts--had been equally far off the mark.

And when the US revealed to the Soviets our new awareness of this reality--in a speech by Deputy Secretary Gilpatric which I myself proposed and drafted--the Berlin crisis of that year appeared to subside.

In later years my satisfaction at having helped bring about this effect was tempered by the conclusion of several qualified analysts that the Gilpatric speech, and the humiliation it represented for Khrushchev, played a significant role in his decision the following spring to send medium-range missiles covertly to Cuba. The result was the Cuban Missile Crisis: regarded by the public and most officials then and to this day as the closest approach the world has come to two-sided nuclear war.

Just how close was that?

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Why restudy the Cuban Missile Crisis?

Because it was the Three Mile Island of the nuclear era.

Because the most authoritative current interpretations--still dominated by the foreign policy equivalents of nuclear reactor managers--are dangerously misleading.

And because immediate, unprecedented opportunities to reduce the risks of nuclear war erupting from future crises may depend on better public understanding--reflecting newly-revealed and yet-unrevealed data--of this earlier "close call."

The coincidence of a 25th anniversary two years ago and the onset of Soviet glasnost has produced a flood of significant new data, much of it unavailable to my own official study of the crisis in 1964 despite my then almost unprecedented breadth of interdepartmental and highly-classified access.

But I find that much of the most significant data that I uncovered in my own study is still unrevealed publicly and unknown to most scholars, as are a number of my own interpretations--necessarily tentative now, in light of the ongoing stream of revelations--reflecting both old and new discoveries.

Over the next several months I plan to write up and disseminate the results of my past investigation, hypotheses and questions raised by the latest testimony, and my best present understandings on a number of issues: which stand on their head many of the most widely accepted interpretations.

I am doing this with some feeling of urgency because it is precisely from the perspective I propose that essential analogies emerge between that episode and the current intense controversy over short-range nuclear missiles and artillery which is dividing the NATO alliance.

Properly understood in the light of that analogy--a dimension missing from current discussion because of widespread misconceptions of both the past and present situations--the current dispute poses an opportunity and a challenge to the publics of NATO countries, the US in particular, to intervene politically in the interests of their own security.

My interest in this matter is not now, any more than it was in 1964, primarily that of an historian. My aim, now as then, has been an understanding of events that would be not only accurate but relevant to policymaking in ways that could help reduce the risk of nuclear war. I am drawn back to this episode this month, this year, because it is newly apparent that such an understanding is within reach.

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Key to the analogy--thus, to the possibility of learning vital lessons for present NATO policy from the earlier experience--are several of the most striking of recent revelations, each totally unheralded in earlier accounts.

First is the emphatic and, by now, persuasive assertion by all the knowledgeable Soviet sources that there were two major motives stimulating Khrushchev's deployment of missiles to Cuba, one of which--actually forcing the pace--was his desire to deter what the Soviet leadership believed to be an imminent US invasion of Cuba. The Soviet witnesses differ as to whether this concern was somewhat greater, less, or about equal in importance to Khrushchev's desire to reduce Soviet inferiority to US strategic striking power, but all agree that it was at least comparably important.

Until this testimony, almost no American analyst gave any credence to this deterrent motive--despite Khrushchev's own (implausibly exclusive) emphasis on it--ignorant as they were of the documentation recently obtained under the Freedom of Information Act indicating that such Soviet concerns about invasion were not only plausible but realistic.

These documents concern: the aims and premises of the covert Project Mongoose throughout 1962, whose director repeatedly reported that its objective, accorded "highest national priority," of overthrowing the Castro regime could only be achieved by eventual US invasion; the nature of Caribbean maneuvers in 1962 openly rehearsing invasion; and urgent and highly secret contingency planning for invasion directed by the President on October 1--to be fully ready for execution by October 20--and closely monitored for him by Secretary McNamara in the first weeks of October, prior to the discovery of Soviet missiles.

Although no evidence has surfaced of a definite Presidential decision to carry out these October plans--which were accompanied by concrete preparations in the form of force movements and stockpiling--and probably no such decision had been made before the missiles were discovered on October 15, statements by Bundy and McNamara this year absurdly describing these Presidentially directed preparations as "routine contingency planning," denying "any intention" of invading Cuba "after the Bay of Pigs," and professing "astonishment" that the Soviets could have been otherwise persuaded, can only be understood as persistent deception. That was, after all, part of their job as managers of covert operations and planning for it.

But their continued denials, repeated as recently as this spring in the face of increasing documentation, have misled analysts at the Kennedy School to draw as a principal lesson of their investigation that the crisis was brought on by (Soviet) "misunderstanding" and might have been averted by better "communication." (About, e.g., the aims of Mongoose? Or the real intent--which remains to be revealed--of the emergency contingency planning for invasion in October?)

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With attention thus directed to the issue of whether the Soviets' unquestionably sincere expectations of invasion were justified or not, no party to the discussion so far seems to have focussed on the special nature of Khrushchev's response or its relation to NATO strategy, past and present. In a word: Khrushchev's strategy of "defense" via deterrence was that of NATO.

The strategy that Khrushchev chose in 1962 to deter invasion German reluctance, in the mid-Fifties to deter invasion of West Germany and Western Europe. It is the strategy which President Bush is pressing Chancellor Kohl to maintain and "modernize" today, against the wishes of 90% of the German population, and in rejection of recent proposals by Gorbachev for its mutual abandonment.

It is a strategy of threatening, whether overtly or tacitly, first use of nuclear weapons against a non-nuclear attack, threats implemented and made credible, in large part, by nuclear weapons stationed on the foreign soil being "defended."

But Khrushchev's application of this strategy in 1962 deserves a closer look, for the unfamiliar comparison to US and NATO strategy can be newly revealing about the latter as well. (Of course, I am only sketching the argument of the study here, to indicate its bearing on current policy).

As I have revealed elsewhere [see my Call to Mutiny, attached] the US has frequently made first-use threats, tacitly or overtly, generally against adversaries that did not possess nuclear weapons. But there is a special problem of making such a threat adequately credible against an opponent that is equally well supplied with nuclear weapons.

Khrushchev had in fact made such threats earlier, purporting to protect Egypt with them in 1956 and Cuba, just after the Bay of Pigs in 1961. They were regarded by US officials as hollow bluffs, as they surely were. Khrushchev had only 4 ICBMs in the spring of 1961, though the US didn't know that. But even over-estimating his missile by 30 to 40 times, as US intelligence was then doing, it would obviously have been suicidal for Khrushchev to carry out such threats, and no one in the US government imagined he would do it.

But it would have been just as suicidal for Khrushchev to launch an MRBM from Cuba, especially after Kennedy's dramatic but largely uncriticised commitment to treat even a single launch as requiring a "full retaliatory response against the Soviet Union." Yet Secretary of Defense McNamara has now revealed that he and President Kennedy both took the possibility that an MRBM would be launched against the US in the event of a US non-nuclear air or ground attack against Cuba, not as a certainty or high probability, but very seriously indeed: enough so as to come close to precluding their deciding upon such an attack, in face of the

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possibility that some of the missiles were operational, a possibility that could not be excluded from the earliest days of the crisis.

This is news. If true, simply about the subjective judgments of these two senior officials in the chain of command, it has an immense implication, which McNamara does not spell out and which no analyst seems yet to have noted. It implies that the vast and urgent preparations for both air attack and invasion being carried out throughout the intense phase of the crisis and even beyond it, the apparently serious discussions and growing expectations of such measures within the "ExComm" and the deliberate leaks of such expectations to the press, all this--leading up to and including Robert Kennedy's explicit ultimatum to Ambassador Dobrynin on the night of October 27--had the character, from the perspective of the President and Secretary of Defense, of an enormous bluff.

This turns on its head the consensual understanding of the President's strategy and aims in the crisis: especially in combination with other revelations by McNamara and others that indicate that the President's inner circle did not at all expect this bluff--as McNamara seems to have seen it--to be adequate, in the terms in which it turned out to be successful, without further concessions by the US. I will explore in the study the evidence for (and against) my own best guess of what the President was up to, in his own mind, during the crisis. But what is pertinent here is the reasons that McNamara has given for his concern--which deterred him from attacking Cuba--that such an attack could lead to a Soviet nuclear response.

Repeatedly in recent interviews and discussions McNamara has emphasized that it was not the prospect of a decision by Khrushchev to fire a weapon that worried him (though he did not excluded the possibility of irrationality by Khrushchev) but the possible action of a "Soviet second lieutenant" controlling a missile, acting without orders in the heat of an American attack on his own unit, or fearing imminent attack in the context of combat elsewhere in Cuba. In effect, as a Secretary of Defense who was himself second in the American chain of nuclear command, he feared that General Secretary Khrushchev could not reliably prevent the firing of a Soviet missile in Cuba in the event of US non-nuclear attack in the vicinity of such weapons.

Quite consistently, he was comparably concerned about the possibility that Jupiter missiles in Turkey with American nuclear warheads might be fired without the formally-required American authorisation, if an American attack on Cuba led to a Soviet non-nuclear attack on the Turkish missiles. (Doing staffwork for the ExComm on the night of October 27 I was made very much aware of this concern, shared intensely by the President: another story that has yet to be told adequately).

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The immediate issue is whether to maintain and "modernize" US and German short-range nuclear missile forces (SNF) in West Germany, or to reduce or eliminate them--along with the more numerous Soviet short-range missiles in East Europe--by an agreement with the Soviets.

Because the Soviets have recently proposed mutual elimination of both SNF and nuclear artillery, and this is supported by 90% of the German public--a large majority of all parties--elimination is a live political option for the first time since such weapons were introduced in the mid-Fifties.

But it would not come about without sharp political debate and struggle, in this country as well as in Europe, since the Bush Administration and the Thatcher Government have made it one of their highest foreign policy priorities to avert elimination and to postpone as long as possible even the start of negotiations over reducing such weapons.

At this point, however, the issues are so poorly discussed and understood in this country that it is scarcely comprehensible why either side feels so strongly about its position. Does it really matter whether these weapons are removed, or stay? (They are only a fraction of NATO's forces; their targets can be covered by other forces; first-use by SNF, bombers, carrier aircraft or submarines would all be about equally suicidal).

Does their presence add significantly to deterrence of attack, as standard NATO asserts and Bush appears to believe? Do they add significantly to the risk of nuclear disaster, as critics fear?

The least obscure consideration, for Bush at least, is the precedent that would be set by removal. Would not pressure come next to trade away nuclear bombs on land-based aircraft in Europe; and after that, nuclear weapons on carriers and nuclear-tipped cruise missiles on ships and submarines in the European region?

In other words, the larger issue is NATO's first-use policy as a whole, including not only aircraft and weapons at sea but the strategic weapons that back these all up--Minuteman III, MX, D5, Stealth and B-1 Bombers, SDI if we get it--that threaten escalation to first strike "if" the Soviets do not permit NATO to prevail at the tactical or theater nuclear level. If the INF Treaty is extended to a "third zero," and a fourth, where will it end?

As Richard Betts has put it in the Spring 1989 issue of Foreign Affairs: "A specter is haunting Europe, the specter of denuclearization."

Not to worry, however, he reassures "the traditional mainstream of elite thinking," which, of course, equates denuclearization with communism. He even scolds "the strategists most frightened by the specter of denuclearization" for sounding "more like Chicken Littles than like sober hawks." After all, he

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points out, the INF Treaty that has made them nervous "leaves unmolested (sic) several thousand US tactical nuclear weapons on the ground in Europe."

Betts acknowledges that "The INF treaty could turn out to have a more destructive (sic) effect, however, if it creates a momentum toward more far-reaching removal of tactical nuclear weapons." But, he goes on, "There is no reason that this need happen."

Of course, by the time his article appeared, during the near-crisis in German-American relations in the weeks before the NATO Summit, Betts' assurance looked a bit overstated; even after the Summit lovefeast, the sober hawks have reason to worry that the sky might really start to fall, in a year or two. That is, if it really does matter whether the tactical nuclear weapons themselves stay on German soil or not, as Betts--and Bush--assumes.

The larger issue, Betts admits candidly, is "the difficulty of maintaining a veneer of rationalism over NATO's strategic doctrine," which is "flexible response," i.e., the "first use" threat to initiate tactical nuclear attacks against a Soviet non-nuclear attack of the traditionally expected size.

Ever since the emergence of Soviet retaliatory power long ago, Betts points out, and still more since the arrival of parity twenty years ago, critics have "agonized" that reliance on nuclear escalation, starting with first use, was "suicidal, unbelievable and therefore strategically foolish."

Betts, like others in the mainstream, clearly does not agree; but why not? No one will deny that escalation is suicidal; why then is the threat of it not unbelievable and therefore ineffective and unreliable? Just how do tactical nuclear weapons contribute to solving this problem?

Like Bush, Scowcroft, Cheney and Thatcher, Betts avoids answering these questions directly. He readily admits the doctrine has problems, precisely "because its underlying logic is weak." But all these hints of real problems, like his hints that the criticisms have answers, are very vague. This is surely deliberate. He advises directly, "The best way to retard the doctrine's decline is to avoid any more elite handwringing and public debate than necessary."

If, as Betts believes, the alarmist critics are wrong, then what is it, exactly, about this strategy that cannot stand public debate? Could it be something to do with the role of the tactical weapons, now threatened with molestation by European arms controllers, even extermination? Are they really important to the NATO strategy? Would its effectiveness, such as it is, be seriously undermined without them?

I feel sure that Bush and his lieutenants believe that the answer to these last questions is "yes," and that they are

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basically right: but for reasons they are understandably reluctant to expose to public debate. The questions I have been posing are not rhetorical. They have convincing answers, but answers that are essentially unknown to the American public, because they have been effectively obscured for more than a generation.

American analysts of the crisis, who until two years ago uniformly rejected such a motive as playing any significant role now universally accept it as one of the two major motivations, along with Khrushchev's desire to reduce Soviet inferiority in comparisons of strategic weapons. Along with the new acceptance of the sincerity of this long-term Soviet claim has come considerable attention to the question--which I will not pursue here--of the realism of the Soviet concern: Was Khrushchev right to believe that the Kennedy administration was seriously considering and preparing the option of invading Cuba, prior to discovering Soviet missiles there, or not?

CTB Has not been looked at abstractly,
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